

QUEST

February 19, 2002 – Week#8

The past week we had much light in combination with nights below freezing. This resulted in more growth in the crops. Watch out that the plants do not become too vegetative. In the somewhat more vegetative crops we see split stems which come together again. When cold air falls on the heads, the problem will be more serious (those with screens must watch out when opening or removing the screen). These split stems lead to weaker growth and clusters that are close together. Remove one of these clusters, because there are too many over a short distance. This way the head will become stronger again; but we must also keep the plants strongly generative.

In older crops (from the 5th cluster onward), it is better to take out the increase on light. It is better to vent close to the heating target in order to steer more generatively. When mild, vent at for instance 0.5° and when cold at 1° above the heating set point. Do not vent too early; start venting when the sun warms up the greenhouse.

If the plant is still too vegetative, the day temperature can be kept a few hours longer, until 19:00 to 20:00 hrs. Extending the day is in proportion to the light sum, starting for instance at 500 J. A possible temperature regime could be 17°/19°C N/D.

In older crops, close to picking but still too vegetative, a pre-night drop may be applied. Don't forget that Quest tends to size fairly late.

For the next period we have to watch out for rapid climate fluctuations (shocks). With changeable weather, it is important to limit the pipe temperature (for instance to 65 - 70°C) so that it does not get too warm in the greenhouse after a rain shower. Heat does not have to be vented away then. Vents that are open too far let in cold air, creating ideal conditions for Botrytis.

On sunny days we have to watch out for (too) high pipe temperatures. The tomatoes have a fair size already and a high pipe temperature while it is sunny can lead to BER. Start in the morning with a pipe temperature of 45° C, and once the sun is higher reduce it to 35 – 40° C.

In the earliest plantings, close to picking it is advisable to have the first two clusters exposed, so that the light penetration is maximized. Harvesting will go much faster. And, deleafing will go much faster the next time around. In later crops, the first cluster should be exposed when the 4th cluster flowers.